

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Remarks Following a Tour of Cape Coast Castle in Cape Coast, Ghana

July 11, 2009

Michelle, the children, as well as other members of my family, just got an extraordinary tour of this castle. It is reminiscent of the trip I took to Buchenwald, because it reminds us of the capacity of human beings to commit great evil. One of the most striking things that I heard was that right above the dungeons in which male captives were kept was a church, and that reminds us that sometimes we can tolerate and stand by great evil even as we think that we're doing good.

You know, I think it was particularly important for Malia and Sasha, who are growing up in such a blessed way, to be reminded that history can take very cruel turns, and hopefully, one of the things that was imparted to them during this trip is their sense of obligation to fight oppression and cruelty wherever it appears, and that any group of people who are degrading another group of people have to be fought against with whatever tools we have available to us.

So, obviously, it's a moving experience, a moving moment. We want to thank those who arranged for the tour and the people of Ghana for preserving this history. As painful as it is, I think that it helps to teach all of us that we have to do what we can to fight against the kinds of evils that, sadly, still exist in our world, not just on this continent but in every corner of the globe.

And I think, as Americans and as African Americans, obviously, there's a special sense that on the one hand this place was a place of profound sadness; on the other hand, it is here where the journey of much of the African American experience began. And symbolically, to be able to come back with my family, with Michelle and our children, and see the portal through which the diaspora began, but also to be able to come back here in celebration with the people of Ghana of the extraordinary progress that we've made because of the courage of so many, black and white, to abolish slavery and ultimately win civil rights for all people, I think, is a source of hope. It reminds us that as bad as history can be, it's also possible to overcome.

Thanks, everybody.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:57 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to his mother-in-law Marian Robinson. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Ghana :: Cape Coast Castle in Cape Coast.

Locations: Cape Coast, Ghana.

Names: Obama, Malia; Obama, Michelle; Obama, Natasha "Sasha"; Robinson, Marian.

Subjects: Civil rights : Minorities :: African-American civil rights movement; Germany : President Obama's visit; Ghana : Cape Coast Castle in Cape Coast; Ghana : President Obama's visit; Slavery (historical) in U.S.

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